

## **Indiana Wetland Job Approval Policy**

Every NRCS employee authorized to perform wetland determinations will be required to complete specific levels of training and on-the-job experience, and demonstrate that they have the required skills, knowledge, and ability to make wetland determinations. The following specifies the minimum training and experience needed to complete wetland determinations. NRCS Indiana State Office Technology Staff will maintain Wetland Job Approval for each NRCS Indiana employee.

Each *NRCS Indiana Area* shall have a designated wetland policy person to assist the Area Conservationist (AC) with NRCS wetland policy and procedures. The NRCS wetland specialist (WS) will serve as the designated wetland policy person. If an NRCS Indiana Area does not have a WS then the AC will assign a qualified person to serve as the wetland policy person.

The wetland policy person shall:

1. Achieve Basic Certification, Agricultural Determination Certification, and successfully complete the Army Corps of Engineers Reg. IV course.
2. Assist field personnel with wetland questions and issues.
3. Coordinate quality assurance reviews of wetland determinations.
4. Recommend wetland approval authority and maintain documentation for applicable approval authority at the area level.
  - a. Will communicate approval authority to Technology Staff at the State Office.
5. Represent NRCS at FSA local appeal hearings.
6. Obtain field information for wetland mitigation and restoration plans.
7. Obtain field information for minimal effect exemptions.
8. Monitor wetland restoration and mitigation sites.

### **1. Basic Certification**

Basic Certification allows NRCS personnel to complete the following:

- a. Explain USDA wetland policies to clients.
- b. Sign wetland determination letters

To achieve Basic Certification, NRCS personnel will complete the following training:

- a. NRCS wetland policies (NRCS Wetland Conservation Policy, Food Security Act Policy, and other state and federal laws) training from the State Office Programs and Technology Staff or equivalent on the job training.

### **2. Agricultural Determination Certification**

To achieve Agricultural Determinations Certification, NRCS personnel will complete the following:

- a. Achieve Basic Certification.
- b. Food Security Act Training and NRCS Field Indicators of Hydric Soils (2 days lecture/field), Technology Staff.
- c. On the job training with Resource Soil Scientist (RSS) and a demonstrated ability to identify hydric soils, as certified by a qualified NRCS soil scientist.
- d. Successfully complete 2 determinations that are reviewed by Area Wetland Policy person or appropriate State Office Technology staff.

To maintain approval to complete Agricultural Determinations they will:

- a. Complete 4 wetland determinations per year.

### **3. Non-Agricultural Wetland Determination Certification**

To achieve Non-Agricultural Wetland Determination Certification, NRCS personnel will complete the following:

- a. Achieve Agricultural Determination Certification.
- b. Complete the Army Corps of Engineers Reg. IV course with a passing test score.
- c. Complete NRCS Hydric soils class (40 hour course) for Wetland Determinations, or certified as capable of identifying Hydric Soils by a qualified Soil Scientist.
- d. Complete NRCS Wetland Plant ID course (40 hour course) for wetland determinations or equivalent training and/or experience, **and** certified as competent in Plant ID by appropriate State Office Technology Staff.
- e. Complete Field Practicum for non-agriculture wetland determinations (2 day class/field training) with a passing score from a written/field test, Technology Staff.
- f. Successfully complete 2 determinations that are reviewed by a qualified Area Wetland Policy person or appropriate State Office Technology staff.

To maintain approval to complete Non-Agricultural Wetland Determinations they will:

- a. Will complete 6 non-agricultural wetland determinations per year.

### **4. Collaborative Wetland Determinations**

NRCS employees who do not meet certification to complete non-agricultural wetland determinations independently may complete them in a collaborative effort. At a minimum at least one employee must be certified as competent in Plant ID (see item 3d) and another must be certified as capable of identifying Hydric Soils (see item 3c). Both employees must have successfully completed the Army Corps of Engineers Reg. IV course.

### **5. Mitigation Certification**

NRCS employees shall have the following training as described under each topic.

*For Wetland Functional Assessment, Mitigation Ratio, Restoration/Mitigation Plans, and Minimal Effect*, each employee must receive on the job training before certification from appropriate NRCS Indiana State Office Technology Staff.

*All mitigation easements* must be approved by the NRCS WRP Coordinator in accordance with WRP policy.